

Peer Support Program- FAQs

Q: What is a peer?

A: A “peer” is generally thought of as “one with an equal standing with another.” For the MDOC Peer Support Program, a peer will be someone “closely aligned” in assignment or day-to-day duties. When a peer nominates a fellow peer, they have identified them from an equal standing and as a go-to person within their area of responsibility.

Q: Who can nominate a Peer Support Person?

A: It is an important part of the program that people are nominated by their “peers.” This would be someone you work with directly and, most often, in a similar position. If an employee in a supervisory position nominates a staff member, both the supervisor and the staff member will be contacted by the Wellness Unit. An additional nomination of the staff member by a fellow “peer” may be requested.

Q: May I nominate myself?

A: Self-nomination will not be accepted. It is important to the integrity of this Peer Support Program for colleagues to nominate other peers. If you are interested in being considered for a PSP, please discuss your interest with your colleagues.

Q: May an MDOC Mental Health employee be nominated for the Peer Support Program?

A: Yes. Licensed mental health professionals usually have a developed skill set which is congruent in the role of a PSP. Mental health professionals who are selected as a PSP candidate will be provided training on the professional role differences, setting clear boundaries and role conflict strategies.

Q: Will everyone nominated be selected as a PSP?

A: No. The initial goal for the Peer Support Program is the selection of 100 PSP volunteers. Depending on the number of nominees received, PSP’s will be selected based on fit for role and work location. As the PSP Program grows during the next year, additional support needs will be determined.

Q: Why are some employees not eligible to be considered for the PSP program at this time?

A: It is essential for the PSPs to be free from responsibilities which may appear to conflict while in the role. Conflicting roles may include those in supervisory positions or those with union obligations. Yet, as the Peer Support Program continues to develop and become established within the MDOC, we will be diligently working on ways for those who are in these deferred positions to be considered and included as PSPs.

Q: My peers have nominated me, but I have decided that I cannot currently make the commitment. What can I do?

A: By asking this, it demonstrates that you have placed careful thought into taking on this valued role. We understand that life looks very different right now and has many challenges. The PSP program will be continuously growing. If circumstances change, and you have an interest in being a part of the Program, please contact the Wellness Team for nomination information.

Q: Will PSP’s role be considered like a counselor?

A: No. PSP’s will be trained to be good listeners, help to assess the issues and brainstorm possible solutions, and, if appropriate, refer to the Wellness Unit clinicians for further assistance. PSP’s will not be

trained or qualified to be counselors. PSPs who are currently mental health professionals will be provided training on the professional role differences, setting clear boundaries and role conflict strategies.

Q: How are Peer Support services different from the Traumatic Incident Stress Management (TISM) services?

A: TISM team members provide a set of specific crisis response services. TISM services are designed to be wellness events and activated following a critical incident. The PSP services are available to all members of the MDOC community and can be accessed individually and confidentially ongoing. PSPs will be trained to provide support for diverse situations and issues. TISM and Peer Support will work complimentary with each other following a critical incident.

Q: How long does the nomination and selection process take?

A: The closing date for the initial peer nominations is Saturday, October 24, 2020. The organization and selection process will begin immediately with the selection process of initial PSP candidates over the next few months. Nomination updates will be ongoing based on their status.

Q: How long will a PSP serve:

A: A PSP may serve while willing and able to do so.

Q: Will a PSP training be considered a work responsibility and during work time hours? Can I accrue overtime hours for this training?

A: The MDOC Administration is supportive of the PSP program. The initial 24-hour formal PSP training will be counted as work hours. Overtime may not be accrued to attend PSP trainings without the written approval of PSP's appointing authority.

Q: How many hours is the PSP training commitment? Is it in-person or virtual?

A: The initial training will consist of 24 hours and be delivered in both CBT and virtual formats. Continued training and PSP meetings will be occurred quarterly.